

Dallas Depository to Open to Tourists

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DALLAS — Tourists with a couple of dollars may soon be able to peer through the window from which Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963.

Aubrey Mayhew, a Nashville song promoter who owns the Texas School Book Depository, says he plans to open the building's sixth floor as a tourist attraction.

"I am having money problems," he said. Earlier, he had said that he would not "exploit the spot from which the shots were fired that killed Mr. Kennedy and injured John B. Connally, who was the Governor of Texas."

Mr. Mayhew bought the seven-story building on April 16, 1970, at an auction. He said that he planned to make the building into a museum but did not say when.

The announcement three weeks ago that he planned to open the building to tourists prompted the John F. Kennedy Memorial Commission of Texas to ask the Texas Legislature to give it the power to expropriate the building and turn it into a state-operated museum and memorial.

Plea Rejected in 1969

In 1969 the Legislature refused to give the commission this power despite a warning from State Senator Mike McKool of Dallas that a private entrepreneur might buy the building and turn it into a tourist attraction.

"I think the building has as much significant historic value as Ford's Theater, where President Lincoln was assassinated," Mr. McKool said.

The Legislature is not scheduled to meet again until January 1972, but a special session will probably be called early next year because of state budget problems.

The Kennedy Memorial Commission has asked that its pro-

posal for the state to acquire the old schoolbook warehouse be considered at that special session.

In announcing that he planned to turn the building into a museum and tourist attraction, Mr. Mayhew said that he had been collecting Kennedy memorabilia since the day of the assassination.

He now has thousands of items—busts of Mr. Kennedy, campaign posters and buttons, books, newspapers, magazines, documents and photographs. He once estimated that he had spent almost all the money he made in the last eight years on his hobby.

Sold For \$650,000

Mr. Mayhew bought the depository almost by accident. The privately owned building, which had been used for many years as a warehouse by textbook publishers, was offered for sale in April 1970.

Mr. Mayhew said that he entered the bidding after a bidder said that he planned to tear the building down.

"I found I could get it for \$650,000 and decided the real estate alone was worth that, not to mention the historic value," he said.

He paid \$168,000 down and had been making periodic payments on the balance since.

The building is on the west side of Dealey Plaza, a park at the foot of Elm, Main and Commerce Streets in downtown Dallas.

In a building north of the depository, there is a curio shop with a large plaque on the outside reading "John F. Kennedy Museum."

"It's just a souvenir place," Senator McKool said.

The store sells postcards and photographs.

Senator McKool said that the Kennedy Memorial Commission of Texas could operate a museum of "respect, dignity and good taste" if it got title to the building.

He said that he envisioned

a place where scholars could study about Mr. Kennedy. There would be photographs, newspapers and books about the life and death of the President, he said.

U. S. Seized Guns

The rifle and pistol that the authorities said Oswald used were seized by the United States in 1963 under a special act of Congress that gave the Justice Department title to all exhibits introduced in the hearings held by the Presidential Commission to investigate the assassination.

Oswald's widow, now Mrs. Kenneth Porter, had sold the rifle and the pistol to a Denver collector, Jack King, for a reputed \$55,000.

Mr. King later unsuccessfully sued the Federal Government for \$5-million in damages. He said that he had expected to make that much exhibiting the firearms.

The City of Dallas has shown little interest in preserving the assassination site. There are no markers in the area. Signs on the depository warn that unauthorized entry will be considered a criminal act but makes no mention of the murder. A small sign in Dealey Plaza says that flowers may be placed in the plaza in respect to the slain President but that fresh flowers will be removed when they wilt and plastic flowers after two weeks.

About three blocks from the assassination site, there is a stone cenotaph that was dedicated to Mr. Kennedy's memory last year. It shares a two-block park with a restored log cabin that was the first home built in Dallas in the Eighteen Thirties.

Mr. Mayhew has called the request for the state to buy the schoolbook depository "ridiculous." He said that the state had had a chance to acquire it and had not done so. If he had not bought it, he said, it might have been torn down by now.